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Passing Show

—By FRED RUSSELL

'Anastasia' At Shubert

The third import from the London stage in recent weeks, "Anastasia," reached the Shubert theater in New Haven last night for its American premiere.

Initial inspection revealed a good plot. But right now it is buried under too much play and too much talk.

Generous cutting is indicated to free the meat of the story from the needless trimmings. At least a half-hour can be sliced from the running time and never missed.

This should result in a gripping drama with adequate suspense.

Guy Bolton Adaptation

Guy Bolton has done this English adaptation from the French of Marcelle Maurette. Elaine Perry produced.

Alan Schneider has provided heavy-handed direction that frequently bores despite the play's basic interesting qualities.

Set in Berlin between the two World Wars, the plot has three Russian exiles coaching a girl to impersonate the youngest daughter of the Russian czar whom legend has credited with escaping death at the hands of a firing squad during the Revolution.

She progresses from a friendless creature to royal dignity under the guidance of the trio who hope to use her claim the royal Russian wealth that is being held in European banks.

The plotters carry their scheme along well until they almost seem to have the money within their grasp. Then the girl changes her mind and leaves them all in the lurch. And, oddly enough, she proves to be the real Russian princess.

Viveca Lindfors Shines

Anastasia is played in fine style by Viveca Lindfors. She makes the most of every opportunity in her rise from a girl about to commit suicide to the acknowledged daughter of Russian czar. She handles the transformation with sincerity and contributes several well-done scenes, especially the one she has with the Dowager Empress.

Eugenie Leontovich is impressive as the Dowager Empress. She gives the part a regal air and plays it with understanding charm.

As the head of the plotters, Joseph Anthony registers effectively as a man who is ready to be loyal to whatever side can best serve his selfish aims. Sefton Darr and Boris Tumarin are his two accomplices.

Hurd Hatfield, Michael Strong, Carl Low and Vivian Nathan do nicely in lesser roles.

"Anastasia" will remain at the Shubert theater through Saturday night.

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